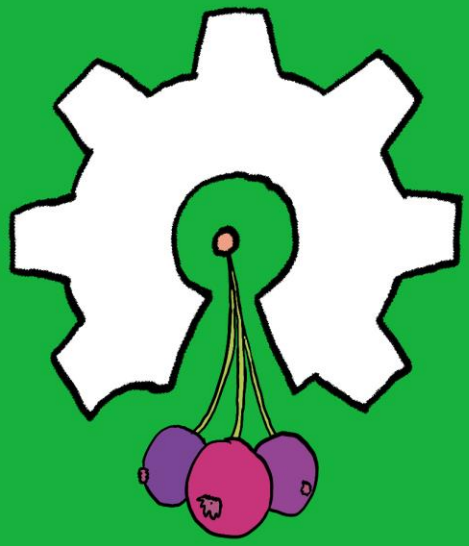
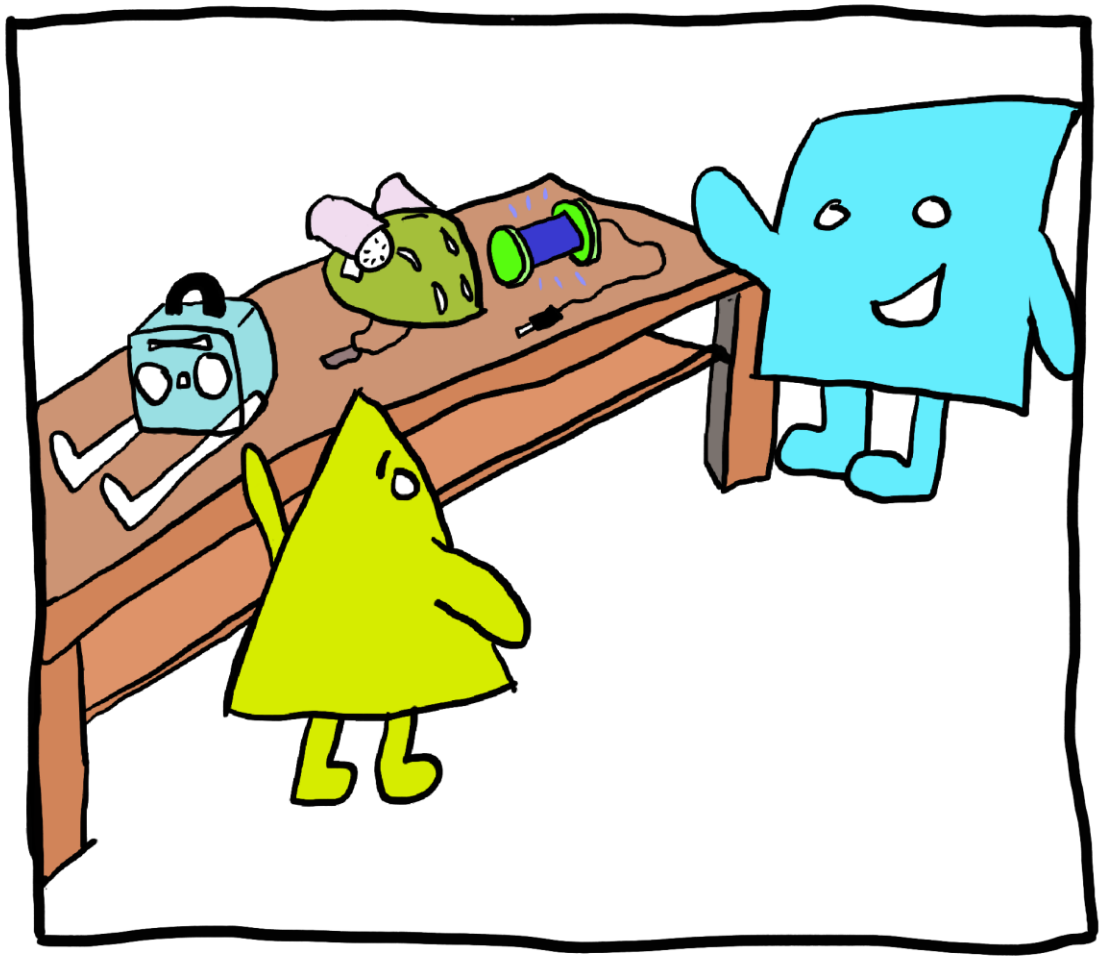
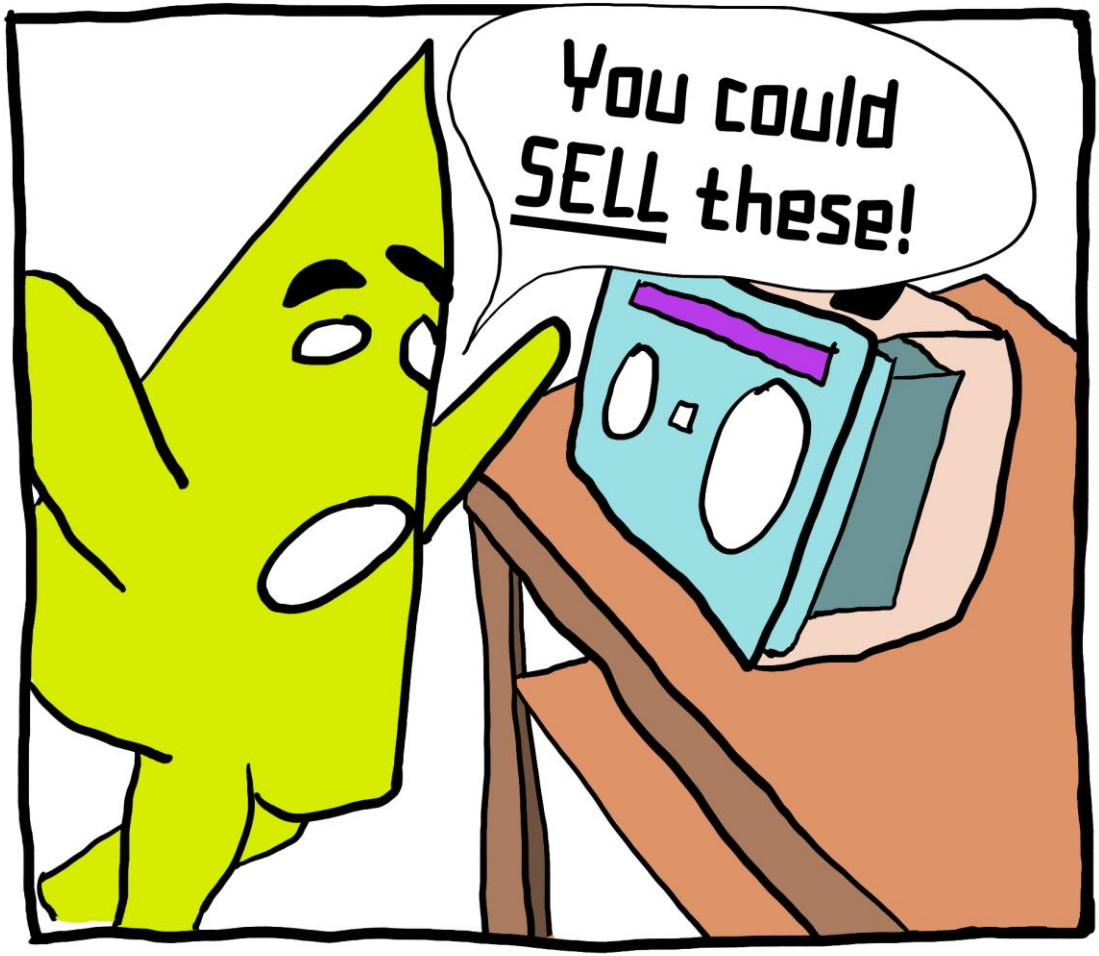
SHARING BERRIES AND TOOLS



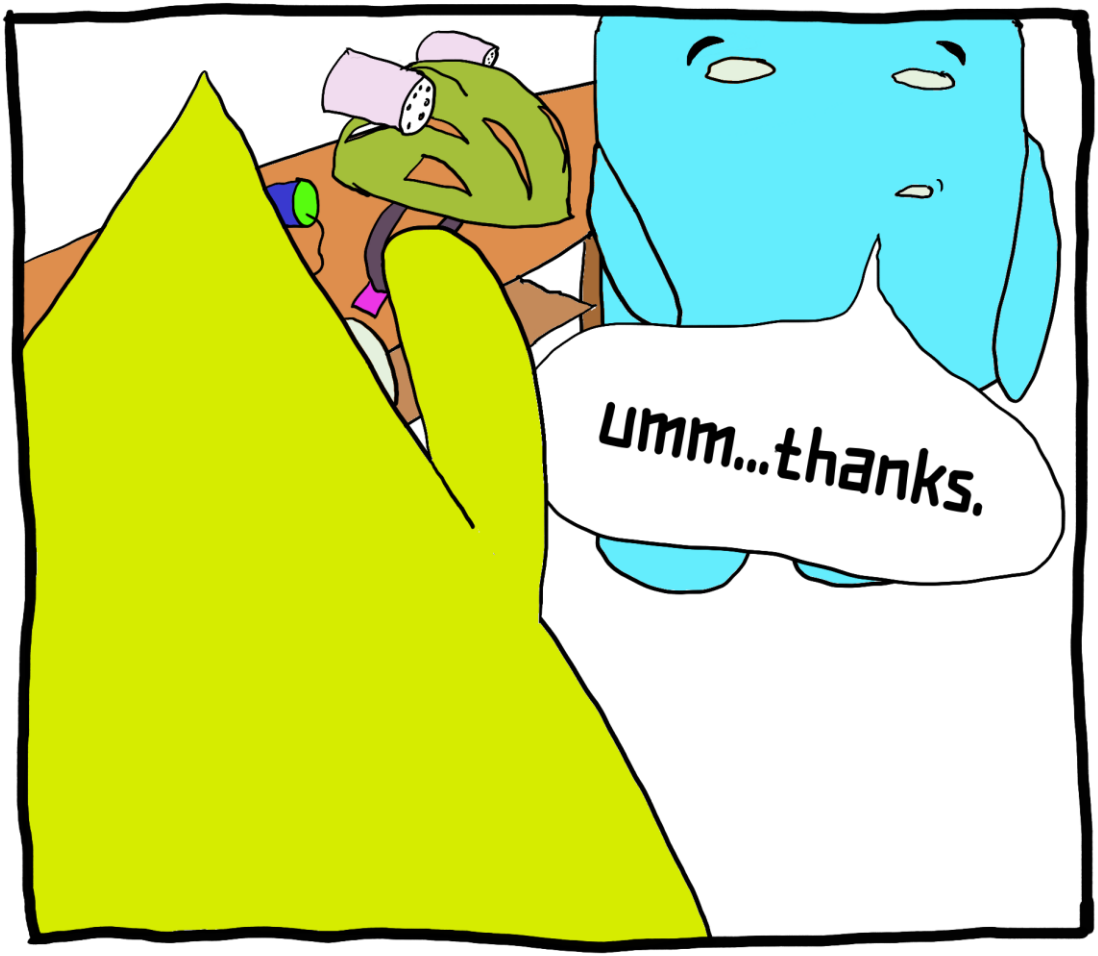
Creating gift economies with inspiration from Open Source Movements and Robin Wall Kimmerer



When I show people my projects, sometimes a thing happens that makes me feel uncomfortable.

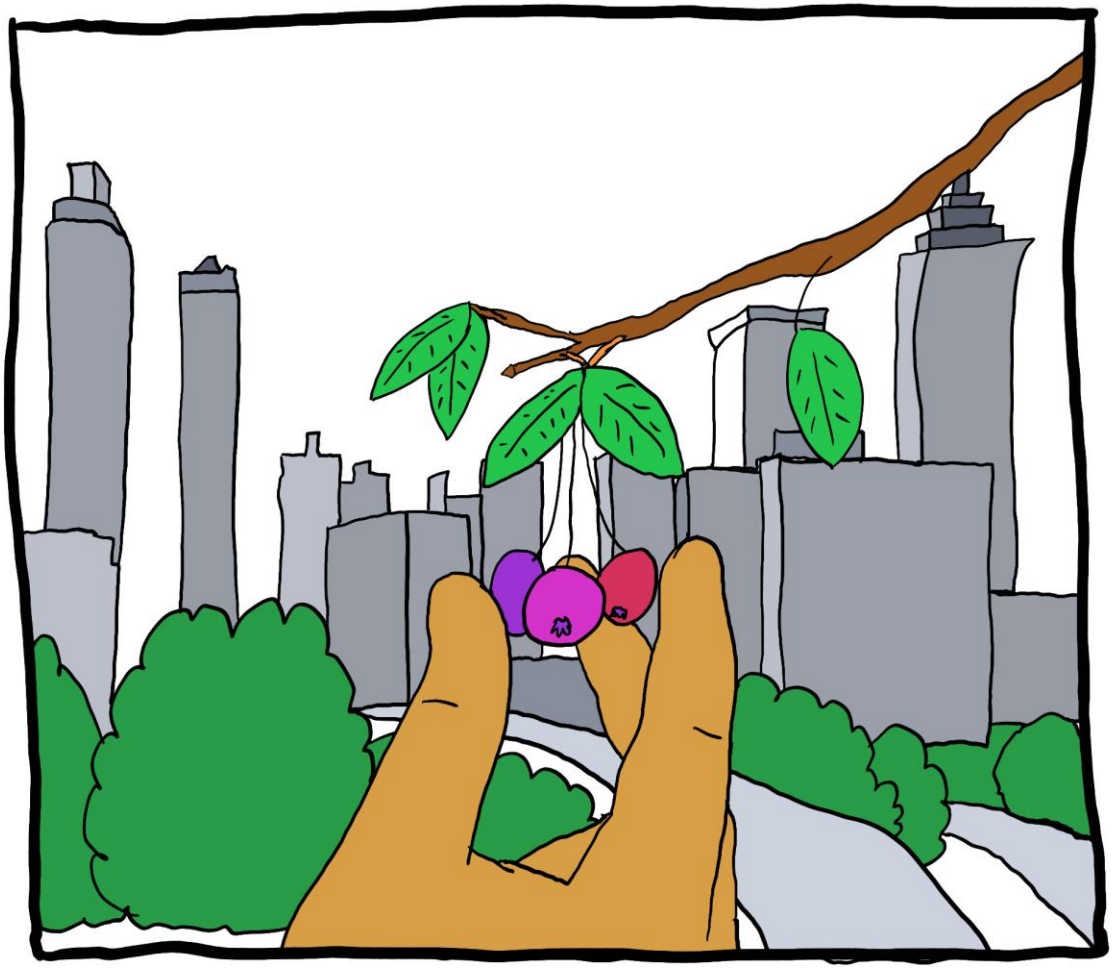


Enthusiastic people, typically those who grew up in very capitalist places, compliment the maker about an item´s profitability.

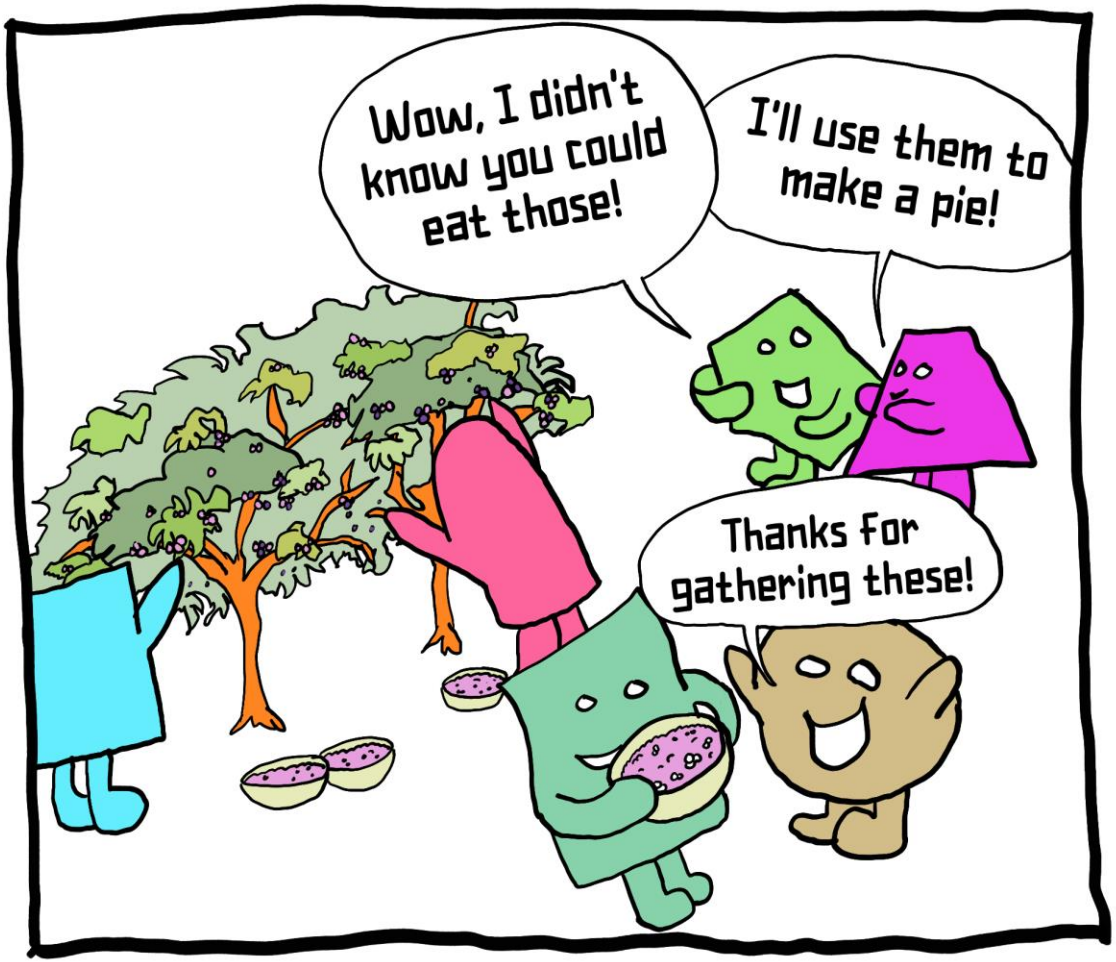


I feel weird because this was never my goal. I wasn't interested in selling things, but in a capitalist society, we are taught that monetary value is the highest value something can have.

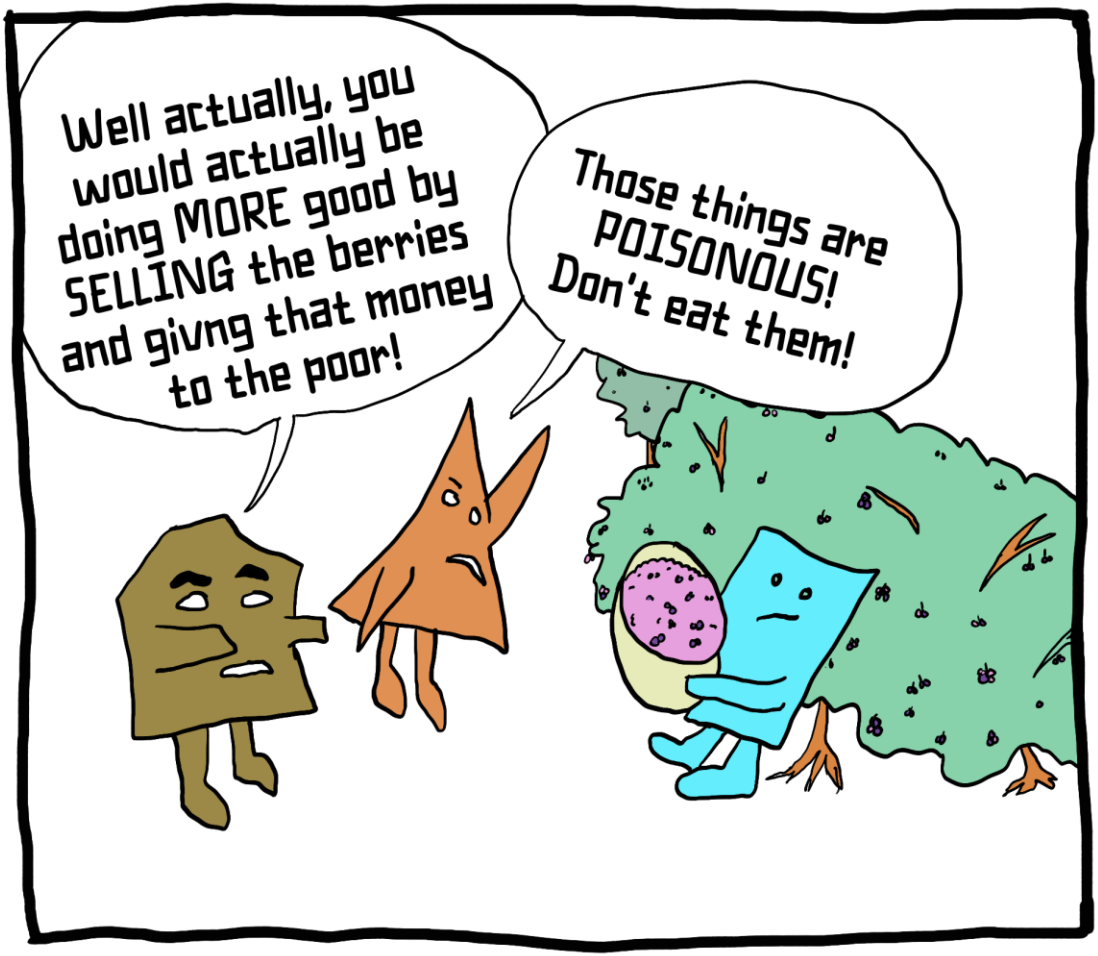
There was one type of project, however, where I noticed people having a very different response: serviceberry picking.



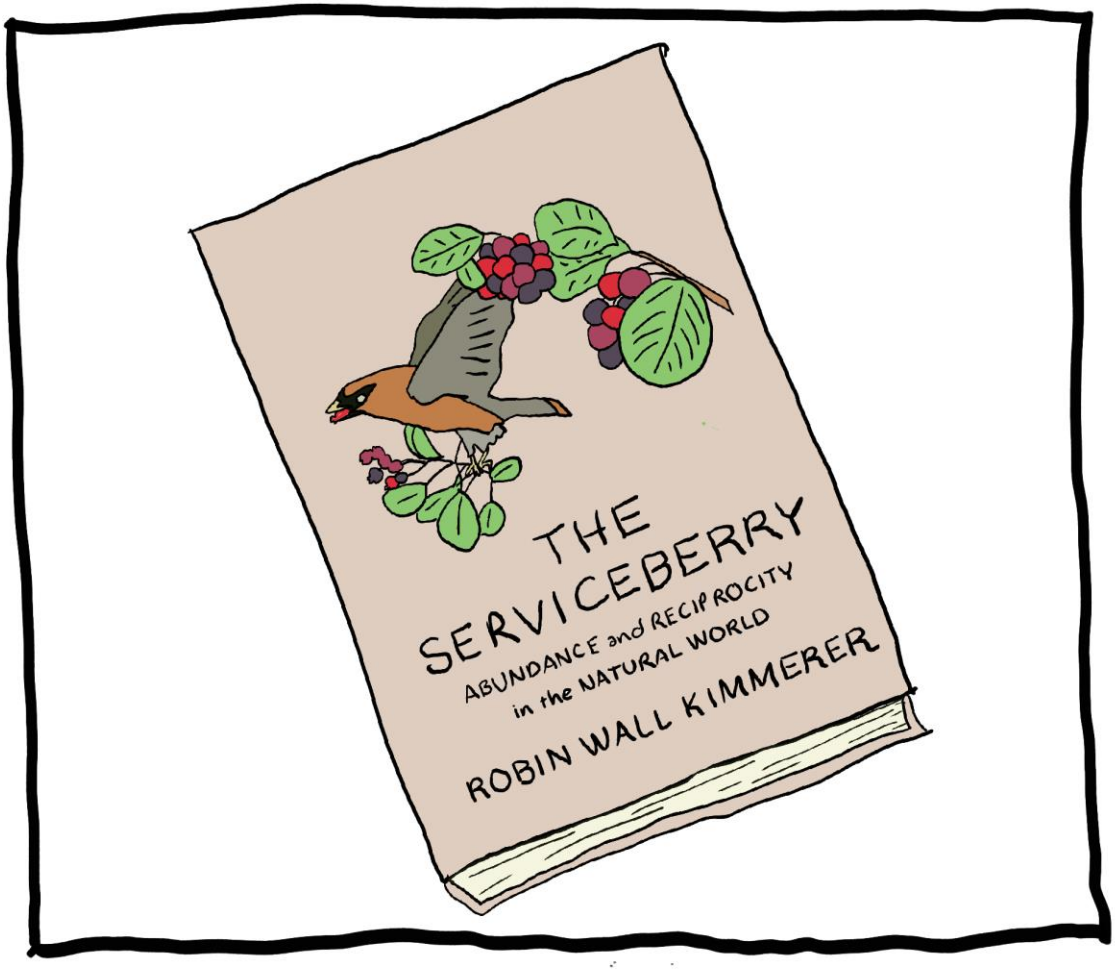
In Atlanta, my buddy Craig and his friends introduced me to foraging serviceberries planted decoratively on public lands. They'd gather fruit to give to foodbanks and friends as part of their "Concrete Jungle" collective.



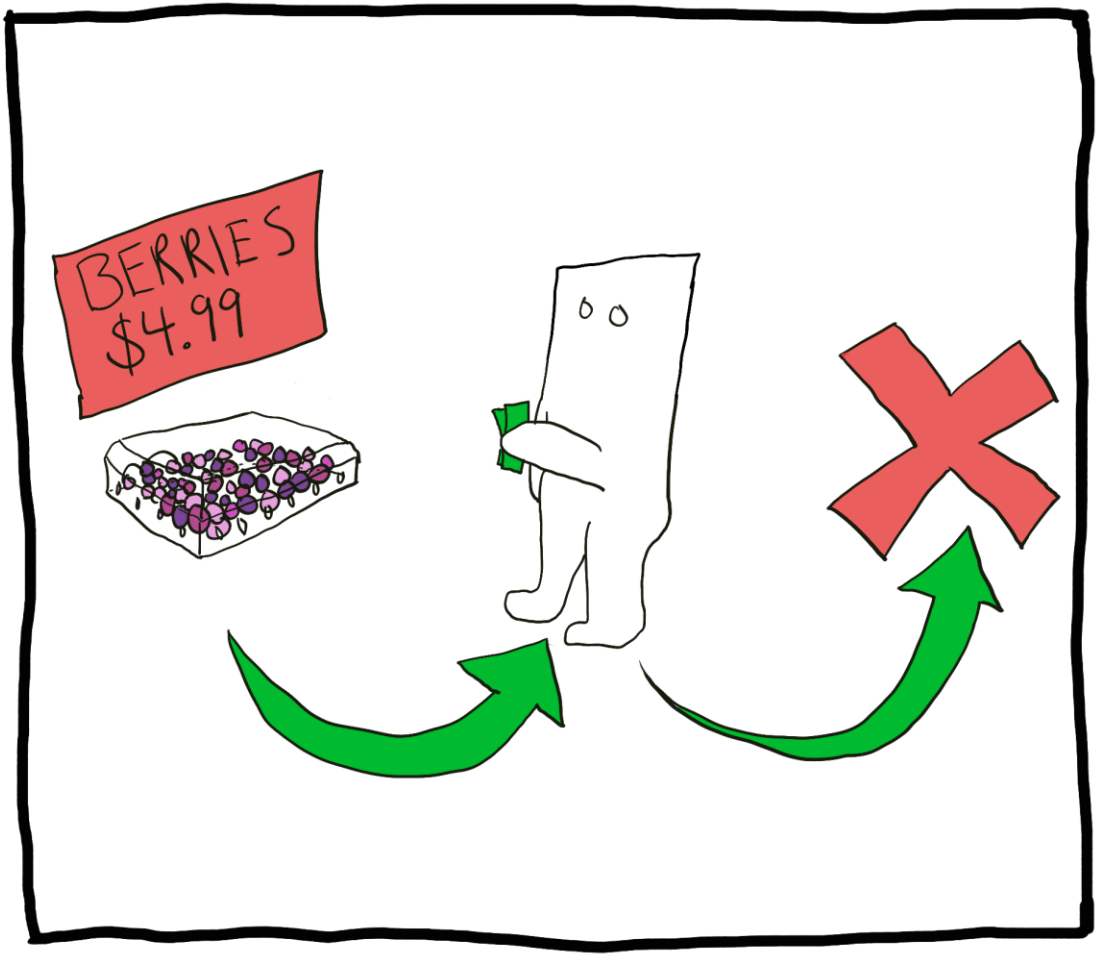
Sharing our harvests excited people, spawned new understandings of the world, and motivated them to help too! These types of responses to hard work felt great!


Well actually, you would actually be doing MORE good by SELLING the berries and giving that money to the poor!
Those things are POISONOUS! Don't eat them!

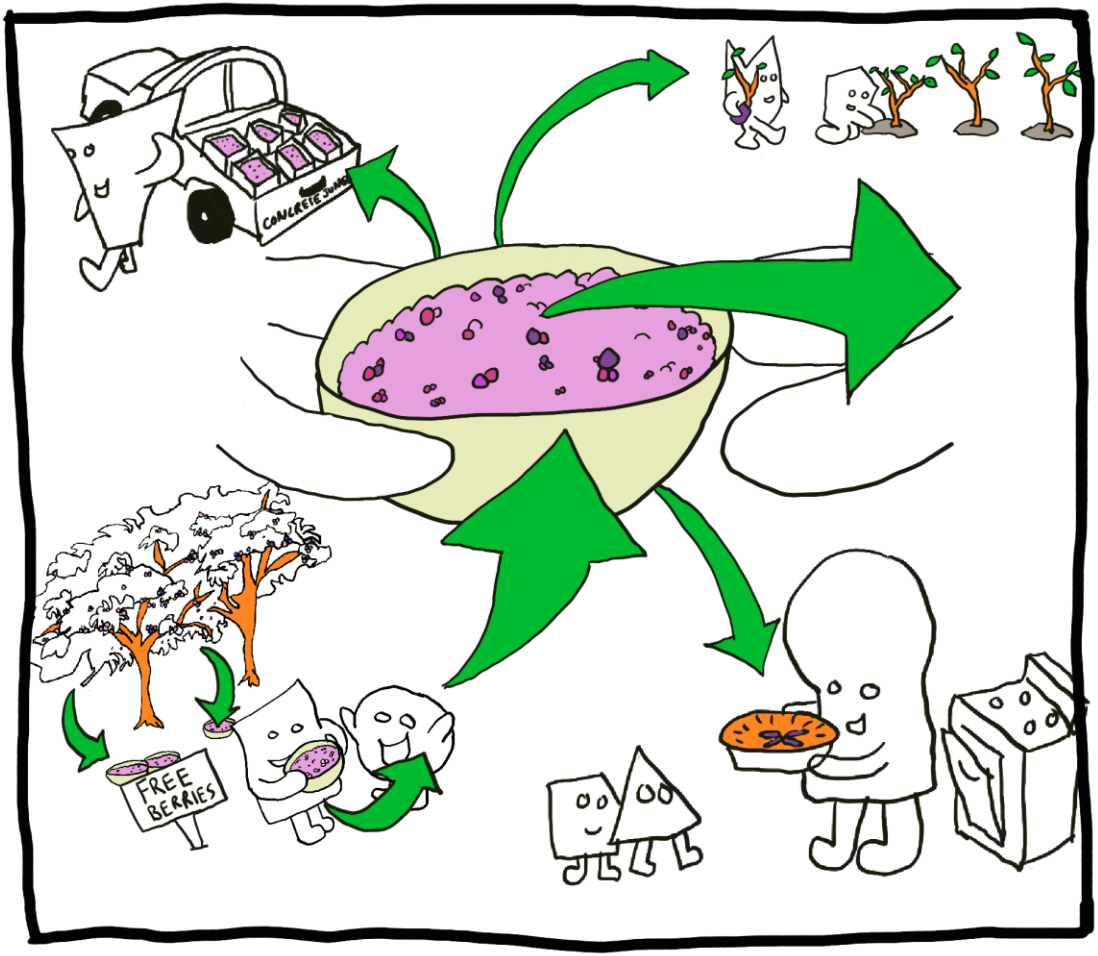
Occasionally, you would still get the wary, capitalist passers-by for whom our gifts seemed infuriating, but such negative reactions were the minority, by far.



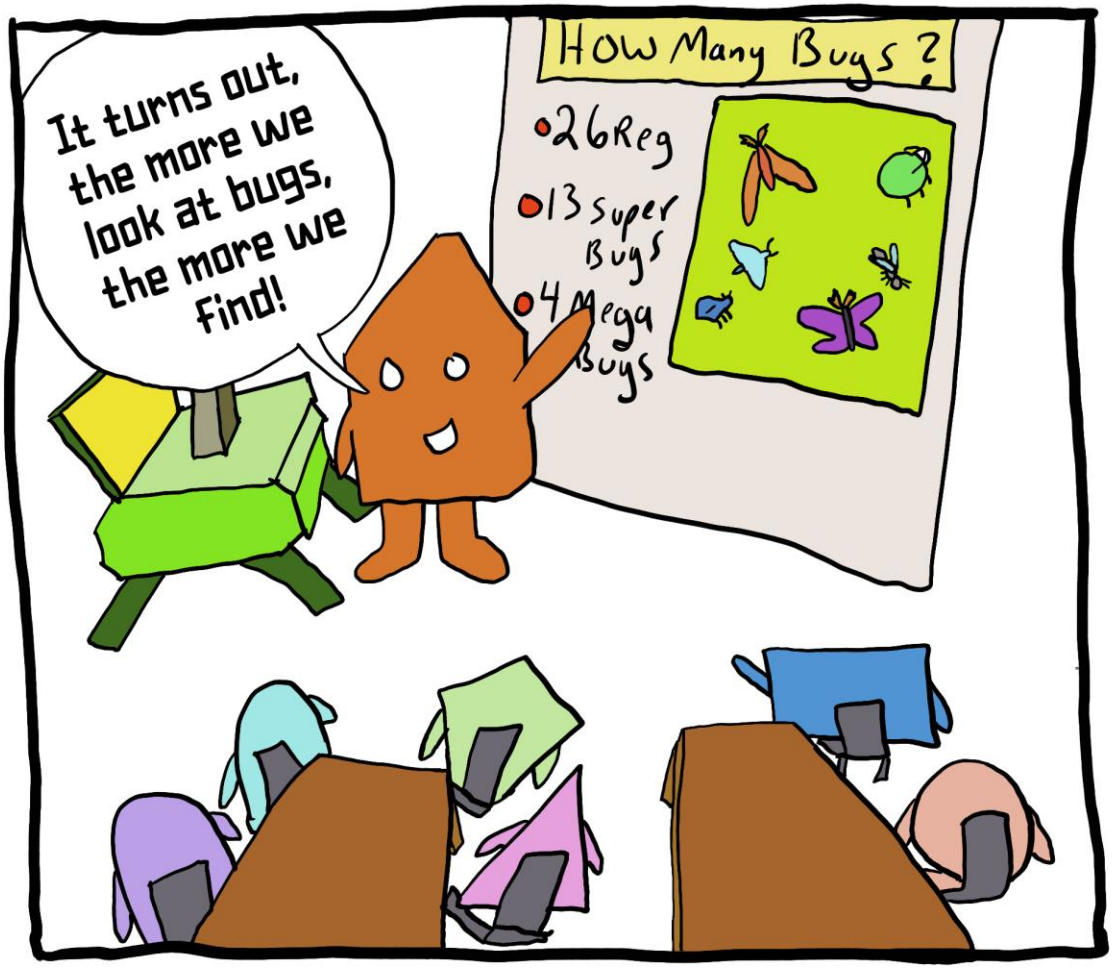
Coincidentally, the book, The Serviceberry, points out that cooperation and generosity are inherently human traits, while scarcity mindsets are pushed onto society by a few greedy sociopaths.



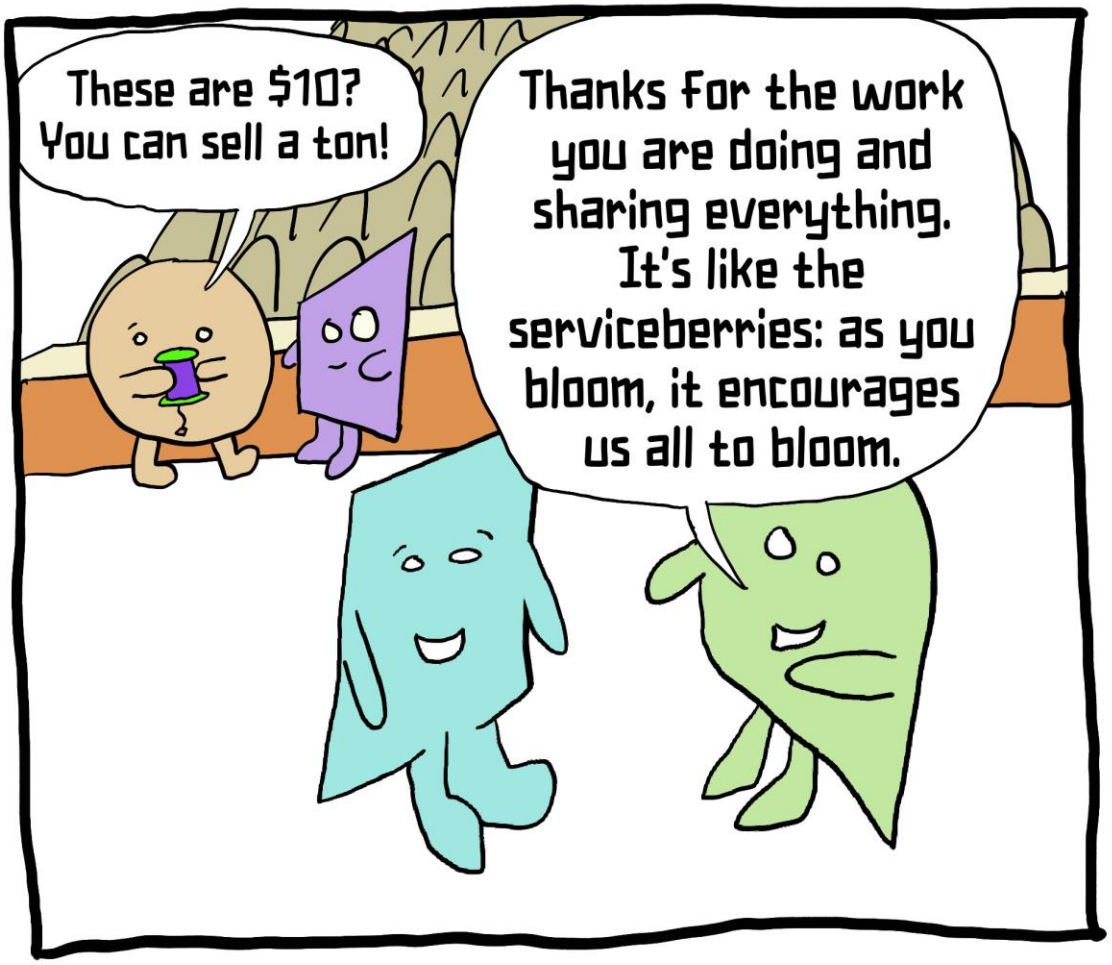
Kimmerer shares that, when we commodify the gifts of the earth, their value is cut short as soon as it hits the consumer. The only way to add more value is by trying to consume more.



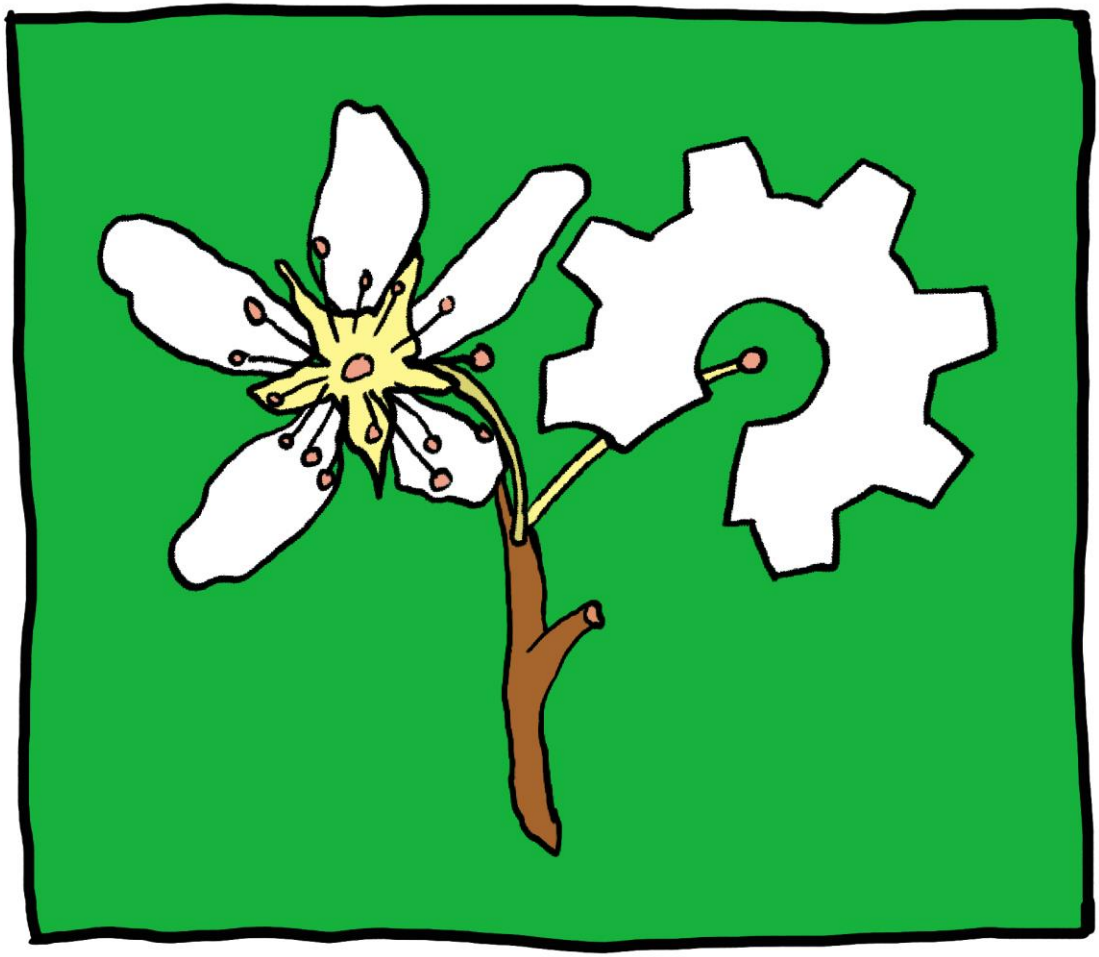
In a gift economy, however, sharing encourages more sharing, activates communities, and new forms of "wealth" blossom at each step of the network.



At a recent symposium with biologists and engineers, a nice scientist finally made the connection for me between my open source work and sharing serviceberries.


These are $10? You can sell a ton!
Thanks for the work you are doing and sharing everything. It's like the serviceberries: as you bloom, it encourages us all to bloom.

In between many discussions of engineering, pricing, and manufacturability of tools, the scientist gave me the response to my work I had always been looking for.



October is Open Hardware Month! While the serviceberries will have finished their yearly offerings, you can still have fun making and sharing with those around you!